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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CUBAN SUBVERSION IN LATIN AMERICA
SINCE JUNE 1964

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Cuban Subversion in Latin America
Since June 1964

1. Clandestine reporting, as well as recent statements by Cuban leaders, leaves no doubt that "export of the revolution" continues to be a key policy of the Castro regime. A former Cuban intelligence officer reports the Castro regime has in operation a highly professional espionage and subversion agency, the General Directorate of Intelligence (DGI), one of whose main tasks is the support of revolutionaries in Latin America.

2. Nevertheless, several reverses for Castro-supported groups and individuals in Latin America during the last year, combined with a possible tactical realignment of priorities in Havana, appear to have led Fidel Castro to be less sanguine about prospects for achieving any quick revolutionary successes. The July OAS resolutions condemning Cuba's past activities in Venezuela may also have caused Havana to adopt a more cautious subversion policy. In addition, the subsequent severance of diplomatic relations with Havana by Bolivia, Uruguay, and Chile deprived Cuba of three important diplomatic posts which could be used to facilitate subversive activity in southern South America.

3. Confronted with such additional obstacles to the promotion and spread of violent revolutionary activity, the Cuban leadership seems to be focusing its subversive efforts today largely on three countries--Venezuela, Guatemala, and Colombia--where guerrilla-terrorist organizations have been operating for some time. Castro probably does not have much hope of full-scale revolution in the near future even in these countries; he probably does

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regard them as the best bets over the longer run. This does not mean that Cuba will cut out other subversive efforts, but that it is now more likely to concentrate on targets of opportunity in the other Latin American countries.

4. Fidel Castro stated to a Western correspondent in Havana in late October that the continuance of the Cuban revolution depends on "other Cubas" succeeding on the continent. Castro expressed this thought again in his public address on 2 January in which he said that the US will ultimately be forced to come to terms with Cuba when it has to deal also with "several" other revolutionary regimes. On 30 November, Che Guevara made the most militant public statement on the "anti-imperialist struggle" in Latin America to be delivered by a ranking Cuban official for some months. He hailed what he called the growing strength of the Latin American "liberation movement," and called for greater efforts by the revolutionaries in the hemisphere. Guevara made special reference to the progress of the revolution in Venezuela, Guatemala, and Colombia. On 13 December, while in New York to address the UN General Assembly session, Guevara said that "bullets not ballots" will bring revolution to Latin America. He candidly admitted that Cuba has helped the "freedom fighters" of Venezuela "acquire military knowledge." He once again singled out revolutionaries in Venezuela, Guatemala, and Colombia for special praise.

5. Cuba's principal agency for subversion, the DGI, was formed in late 1961, and is advised by at least five Soviet intelligence experts. It has three operational departments, the largest of which is concerned with promoting "national liberation" in Latin America. This is the department charged with selecting other Latin Americans for guerrilla warfare training. The DGI's methods of selecting, training, and assigning espionage agents and guerrilla warfare specialists reveal a high degree of professionalism. Moreover, the DGI has developed complex travel arrangements designed to hide the fact that Latin Americans coming to Cuba to receive training have actually been in Cuba.

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6. The number of DGI agents now operating on the continent may well total several hundred. Reliable sources continue to report Latin Americans traveling to Cuba for guerrilla warfare training or political indoctrination. However, the number of Latin Americans being trained in Cuba apparently is considerably below the 1962 level. Most of these are trained under DGI auspices, and are capable of exploiting local resentments and stimulating activities which could develop into difficult internal security problems in several Latin American countries. Perhaps more importantly, these activists usually impart their knowledge to local militants--at little expense or risk to Havana--to increase the revolutionary potential in their countries.

7. Providing guerrilla warfare training and political indoctrination remains the major form of Cuban support for Latin American revolutionaries. Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and other Cuban leaders continue to proclaim that "Cuba's example" is the most important "support" they give to Latin American revolutionaries. Havana also continues to give relatively modest sums of money to some Castroist groups. Propaganda support from Cuban press and radio media is still a major Cuban means for reaching pro-Cuban groups on the continent. There is still no firm evidence to support the many reports alleging that Havana is now sending arms or Cuban guerrilla experts to other Latin American countries, although the 3-ton Cuban arms cache found in Venezuela in November 1963 clearly reveals Havana's capability for giving material support to Latin American revolutionaries.

8. A number of clandestine reports have stated that Algeria is cooperating with Cuba in support of "national liberation" movements in Latin America. Some have mentioned that training camps for Latin Americans are located in Algeria. High level Cuban leaders such as President Dorticos and Che Guevara make fairly frequent trips to Algiers where President Ben Bella joins them in endorsing liberation movements in Latin America as well as in Africa. It may well be that a "mutual-assistance" arrangement is being worked out--Cuba to provide some clandestine help for Algerian activities in Africa, and Algeria to reciprocate by supporting certain Cuban operations in Latin America.

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9. In focusing on Venezuela, Havana is probably most encouraged by the well-established Communist-terrorist apparatus with which it can work. Recent reliable clandestine reports state the Venezuelan Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) can draw upon some 1,800 supporters--several hundred of whom are full-time activists--spread throughout the country. The FALN is well-organized, reasonably well-financed, and most importantly--in Havana's eyes--willing to take action against the Venezuelan Government. The FALN stepped up its activity considerably beginning in late September, although it has since had to curtail its urban terrorist activity and concentrate on operations in the countryside. Havana's propaganda support rose accordingly, nearly reaching the level it achieved in the autumn of 1963 when the FALN was making a determined effort to bring down the administration of former president Betancourt. Among Cuban gestures in 1964 were: participation of Cuban officials in the launching of a new "solidarity with Venezuela committee"; launching of a new domestic radio program specializing in reports on Venezuela; and an islandwide "solidarity" celebration held from 14 to 22 November, which included the opening of an FALN mission office in Havana, elaborate ceremonies, speeches, and interviews with FALN leaders.

10. Recent information strongly suggests Havana is basing its hopes for the struggle against "imperialists" in Colombia on a relatively new organization, the Army of National Liberation (ELN). The ELN is the clandestine terrorist arm of the Colombian Liberal Revolutionary Youth Movement (JMRL), and is called the country's "number one terrorist group" by the US Embassy. Fabio Vasquez, probably the most influential ELN leader and the group's new chief of guerrilla activities, is believed to have returned to Colombia in late November after having gone to Cuba the previous month seeking new funds. [redacted]

[redacted] told embassy officials in November that active guerrilla operations probably would begin early in 1965 if Vasquez succeeded in obtaining additional funds from Cuba. The ELN had previously received US \$25,000 from Havana, according to the source.

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11. The ELN is said to be planning a two-pronged guerrilla-terrorist operation, coordinating an urban campaign modeled after the familiar tactics of the Venezuelan FALN with a program of rural violence. On 7 January ELN guerrillas attacked a small town in Santander state, where they killed three police agents, robbed a local bank, and herded the townspeople into the central plaza for an anti-government, anti-US haranguing. After the assault, the ELN band withdrew to the nearby mountains. Meanwhile, Cuban propaganda media continue to emphasize Bogota's "brutal repression" of the people of the "Independent Republic of Marquetalia." Colombia's military has been engaged in a prolonged operation against Communist bandits in that department.

12. Primary advantages from the Cuban point of view in the case of Guatemala are the existence there of an active guerrilla movement led by Marco Antonio Yon Sosa and the unsettled political situation in the country. Also potentially advantageous are Cuba's geographical proximity to Central America and the large Cuban diplomatic establishment in neighboring Mexico. There is no doubt that Yon Sosa's group receives inspiration and some money from Havana, and that Fidel considers it the one organization in Guatemala with the capability to sustain violent revolutionary activity. The guerrillas operate over a fairly wide area in Guatemala in small but highly mobile bands. They harass military outposts, assassinate certain military officers or persons unpopular with the peasants, and raid small businesses. There are increased indications of local support for the guerrillas among the peasants of the area.

[redacted] reported in mid-December that FALN-type terrorist actions--some against US targets--were planned to begin soon in Guatemala and Honduras to provide new publicity for revolutionaries in both countries. On 31 December, 5 terrorists burned the US AID garage in Guatemala City, destroying it and 23 vehicles. This raid occurred less than three weeks after Guatemalan authorities captured large amounts of terrorist equipment and, they believed the headquarters complex of the subversives in the capital. Yon Sosa's organization's

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militant propaganda organ, "Revolucion Socialista," is an unusually well-printed periodical for a clandestine insurgency group, and may actually be produced in Havana. It is distributed widely in various parts of the country. This periodical is far superior in layout and content to the official propaganda published by the Guatemalan Communist party.

13. Former Guatemalan President Arbenz and his ex-foreign minister and their families reside in Havana, and are active in the propaganda effort directed against the present Guatemalan Government. There is strong indication that Cuban direction and funds enter Guatemala from Mexico. It is also likely that considerable cooperation exists between insurgents in Guatemala and neighboring Honduras.

14. Reliable clandestine reporting indicates that Havana still is in contact with leaders of ~~the extremist wing of Peron's followers in Argentina, with some of the Brazilian exiles in Uruguay, with some of Panama's radical nationalists and Communists, and with a resurgent Ecuadorean pro-Communist youth group and perhaps the Ecuadorean "hard-line" Communist followers of Rafael Llobera.~~ The Cubans' attitude toward these and other revolutionary hopefuls in Latin America seems to be: "We will give you support when you begin the armed struggle." One of the most frustrating situations for the Cubans has been the inability of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) in Peru to initiate anti-government activities. At one time, the MIR had over 500 personnel who had received training in guerrilla warfare or political indoctrination in Cuba. Similarly, Cuba's apparent lack of success in promoting a pro-Castro insurgency effort in Bolivia probably is a disappointment.

15. In summary, Cuba appears to be concentrating its support of Latin American revolutionaries on those who are willing to fight and have the best prospects for success. Although Cuba's leaders are much less confident than formerly about the quick emergence of "new Cubas" in Latin America, there is little reason to believe that Fidel Castro will abandon the "revolutionary struggle." He may however, move cautiously in this regard for tactical reasons.